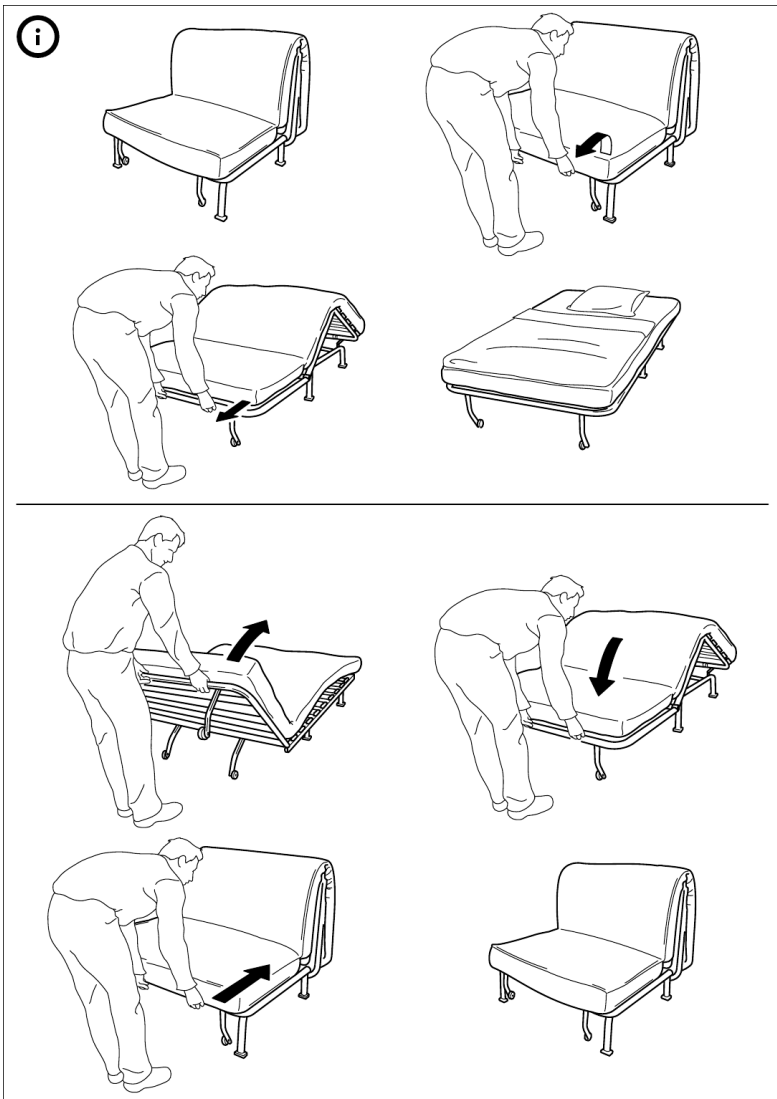


Your Instructions: the key to effective learning

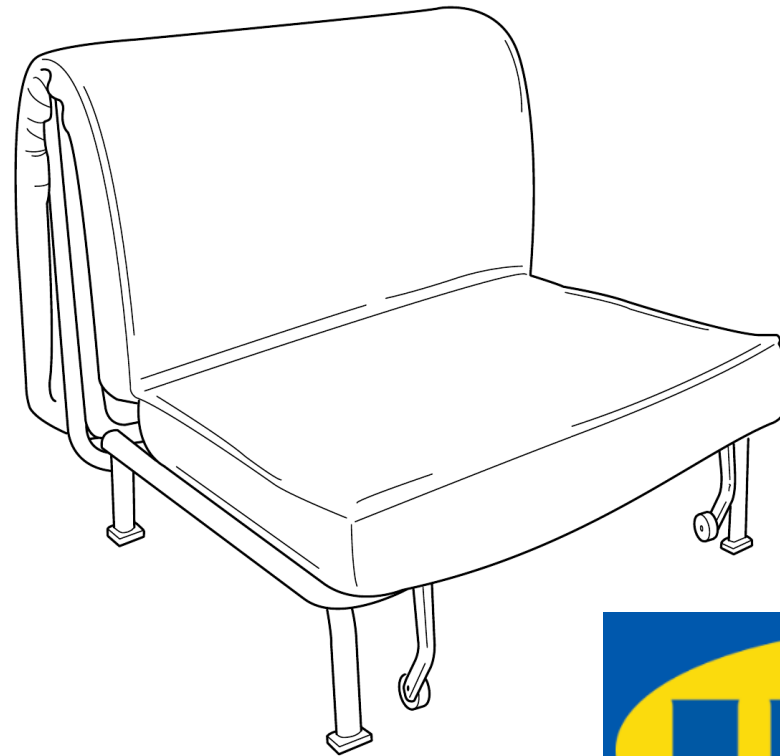
Rachel Appleby, IATEFL-Hungary, October 2022







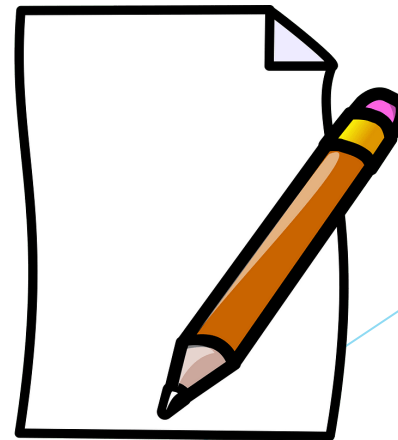
LYCKSELE





A task for you

What have you got?



Problems with “bad instructions”

I often feel demotivated [and] I am willing to put less effort into the task.

... students start to lose interest in the subject.

I feel like I am just wasting my time on trying to figure out what the teacher actually wanted.

Problems with “bad instructions”

“The problem is, the lecturer might think the instructions are clear to themselves without consulting with the students. We are left to interpret what they might have meant.

“Giving instructions” - a title

Teacher confidence

Managing students' expectations

Getting attention

Being authoritative, without being bossy

Professionalism

Outline of session

- ▶ Why instructions are important
- ▶ How we can help our students:
 - ▶ Grading language
 - ▶ Using L1
 - ▶ Strategies: before class, during and after
 - ▶ Differentiation
- ▶ Checking instructions
- ▶ Online instructions



Grading language

1. **Ungraded** ‘So, could you please ... what I wanted you to do was to talk together to do the exercise in pairs ... so get together with a partner, could you ... and it’s on page 22 ... so, OK, when you’ve sorted out your pair, make a start on what you’ve got to do, and jot down the answers.’

2. **Highly graded** ‘Get into pairs.’ [*Waits for students to do it.*]

‘Page 22’ [*Waits for students to do it.*]

‘Exercise B. Work together.’ [*Uses a gesture to indicate ‘pairs’.*]

3. **Graded** ‘OK Everyone. I want you to get into pairs, please. Turn to page 22, and do exercise B. Talk together to agree the answers.’

Using L1

Sandwiching L1 and L2

Teacher gives instructions in English, repeats them in L1, and finally says them again immediately in L2.

Code-switching

(using both languages to deliver the instructions)

Code-switching is when the teacher wants to use a phrase or a word which students would not understand, and **adds or replaces** it with L1 translation



> Philip Kerr L1

Strategies:

Things to do BEFORE you go into class

- *Plan your instructions*
- *Be clear about the aim of the task*
- ***(g) Script your instructions***
- *Order your instructions (logically)*
- ***(a) Check your instructions with a colleague***
- ***(d) Have handouts ready***



Strategies:

Things to think about IMMEDIATELY BEFORE or WHEN giving your instructions

Using your VOICE:

- *Tone: be friendly & polite 😊*
- *Diction: be clear*
- *(h) Speed: slower than classroom 'chat'*
- *(j) Volume: loud enough, but not too loud*

Strategies:

Things to think about IMMEDIATELY BEFORE or WHEN giving your instructions

Procedure:

- *(b) Get your students' attention*
- *Make sure students can see you (see your lips!)*
- *(c) Give a (brief) overview of the task*
- *Go step by step*
- *(i) Use 'please'*
- *Show (e.g. page number)*
- *Demonstrate (show how the activity works)*
- *(f) (Repeat) / paraphrase*

Strategies:

Things to think about IMMEDIATELY AFTER you have given your instructions, or AFTER CLASS:

- *Check students understand (use Instruction Checking Questions: 'ICQs')*
- *Monitor, to see if students are on task*
- ***(e) Reflect: what could you do better?***

Anything else for these lists?

> Choose 3 to try on Monday!

Good instructions matter because ...

- ▶ learners need to know what to do
- ▶ good instructions help build trust and rapport, and inspire confidence
- ▶ Ss will feel more comfortable
- ▶ the class will run more smoothly and efficiently



STT is increased!
(Student Talking Time)

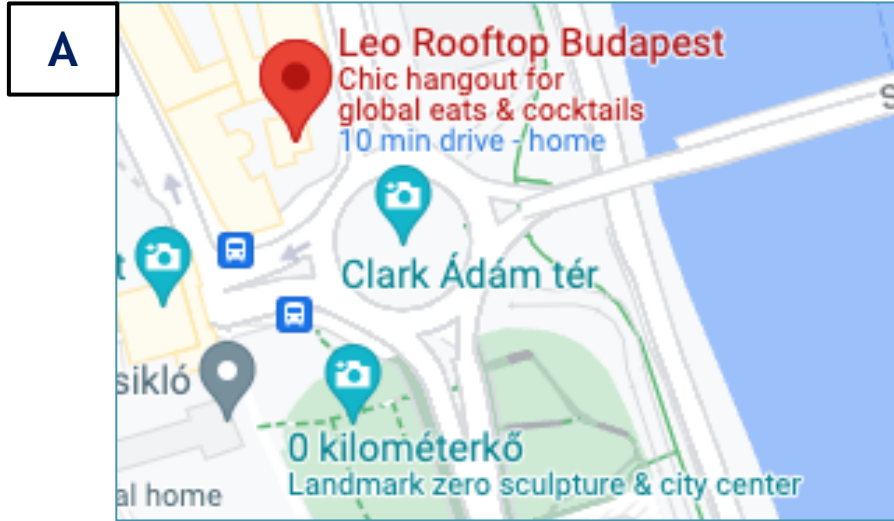
Differentiation

Would you like ...

- A. to have a map
- B. to have audio navigation
- C. to have the address
- D. to have written instructions on how to get there from [e.g. your house]
- E. to be taken
- F. ...



Differentiation



C

1 Clark Ádám tér
1013 Budapest

D

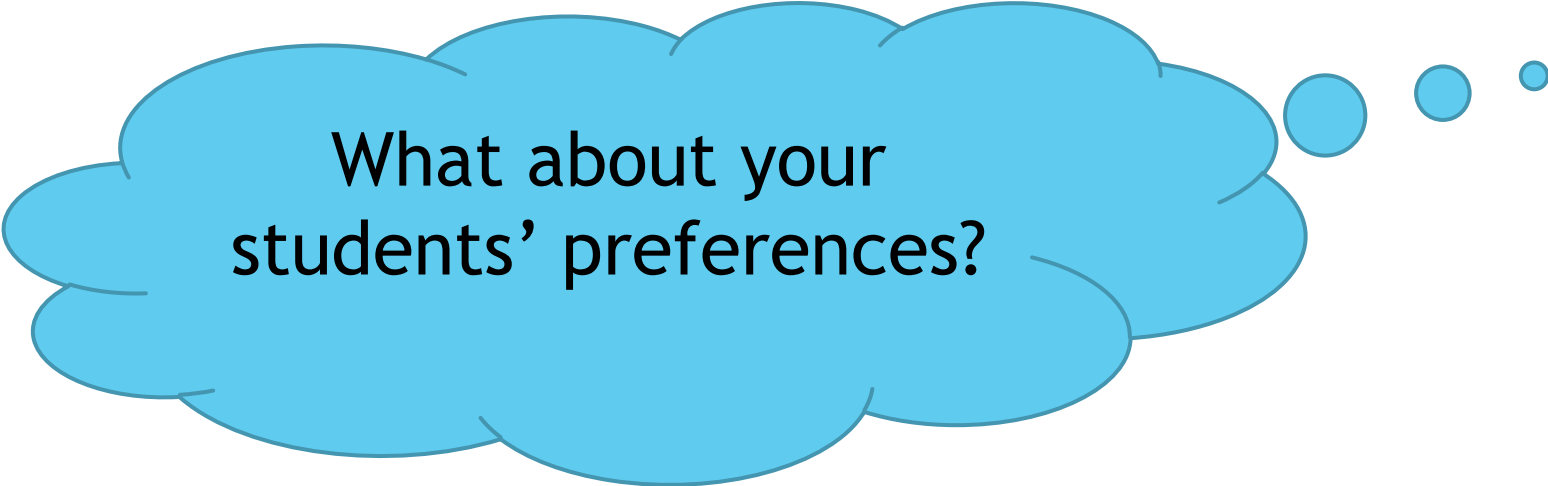
From the metro, ... [...]
Then turn left, ...
and then ...

A blue pen is shown writing on a white notepad. The notepad is tilted and has a folded corner.

E

It's round the
corner from my
flat! I'll take
you!

Differentiation



What about your
students' preferences?



Have you asked them?

Checking instructions

Do you
understand?

OK ?

Any
questions?



- ▶ Students understand
- ▶ Ss are too shy to say they don't understand
- ▶ Ss think they understand

Checking instructions.. with questions

Are they difficult questions?	<i>NO</i>
Do they have long answers?	<i>NO</i>
Do they check the <u>language</u> of the task?	<i>NO</i>
Do they check <u>how to do</u> the task?	<i>YES</i>
Will they make sure the students understand the task?	<i>YES</i>

Checking instructions

Instruction Checking Questions (“ICQs”) ...

- ▶ ... are simple questions
- ▶ ... require a 1- or 2-word answer only
- ▶ ... focus on what could go wrong (not on language)
- ▶ ... are used to check students understand the task

Checking instructions

With a partner (1'):

Are these questions OK? What else could you ask?

a. What do you have to write?

b. Are you writing verbs or nouns?

c. When is the homework due?

d. What page is it on?

e. Are you working alone or in pairs?

f. How many minutes do you have?

?

Instructions Checking Questions (ICQ)

What questions could you use with this task?

Task:

Fill in each gap below with one word from the text you've just read.

Can you use any word?

[No]

Can you use only words from the text?

[Yes]

Just 1 word? Or 2-3 words?

[1 word]

Online instructions

With a partner (2'):

What (if anything) do you do differently online, when giving instructions?



[Sample online task]

- ▶ **Situation:** Organising a conference
- ▶ In your group,
 - ▶ *Elect a scribe (to take notes)*
 - ▶ *Elect a spokesperson (to feedback afterwards)*
- ▶ What will the conference theme be?
- ▶ Where / when will it take place?
- ▶ You have 8'.

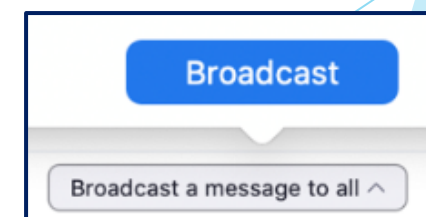
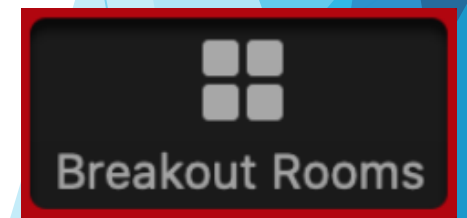
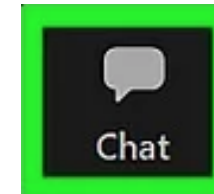
What would you say?

When? (before or after screen instructions?)

Anything else?

Online instructions

- ▶ Get students' attention.
- ▶ Introduce the task.
- ▶ Say your instructions.
- ▶ Show them on screen.
- ▶ Write instructions in the chatbox.
- ▶ Post them again in individual break-out rooms.
- ▶ AND:
 - ▶ Send a 1' notification message:
 - ▶ [e.g.] "Rooms closing in 1 minute"



Online instructions

Extra guidance:

 Speak!

Breakout rooms 5'

Individual work 3'

Feedback

Reflection

to the chat box! ➡

[Sample online task]

Breakout rooms 8'

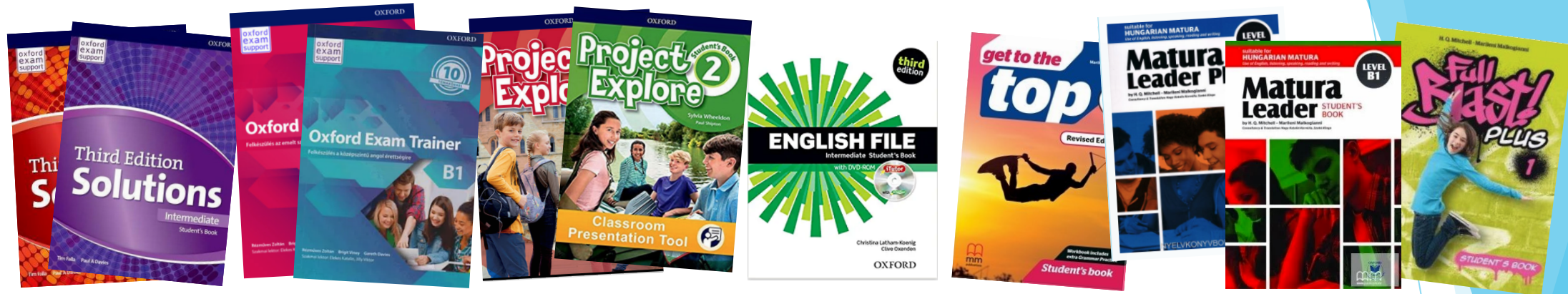
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- ▶ You have 8'.

Positive outcomes

With good instructions, we have every intention of paying attention.

For me, detailed instructions, and, if possible, written down because then they not likely to be open to interpretation.

It's actually all about the instructions and clear communication, which are essential for great outcomes.



High-quality materials + Great instructions = Efficient Learning

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- ▶ Instructions online



.... and finally:



Sources:



- ▶ Rabbit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lD5w-5xoTqA
- ▶ Cartoon: <https://ruinmyweek.com/funny/funny-bad-instructions>
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- ▶ Scrivener, J. (1998). *Learning Teaching*, Macmillan.
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